

## How to lead a discussion

### DOs

- Make sure that you have read the papers thoroughly. You should be able to describe the purpose of the experiment, outline the methods and results, and discuss the implications of the results.
- Come and see one of us if you don't understand some aspect of the paper
- Meet with your partner to determine how you are going to work together to present the papers. Discussion leader dynamic is part of your grade.
- Start with a brief synopsis of the major points of the paper. This should be about 5 minutes at the very most. Do NOT give a summary of all of the methods and results. The assumption is that everyone has read the papers.
- After the overview, start with your questions. Questions without a definite answer are often better, as they promote discussion. Although you can discuss specific results, keep in mind that we are interested in the big picture. The papers are being used as illustrations of a concept.
- Keep the discussion on track. Try not to let the discussion head off on a tangent. We don't have much time to discuss both papers.
- Involve everyone in the discussion. Ask specific people questions to get them involved. Try not to let certain people dominate the discussion.
- At the end, you and your partner should give a brief wrap-up. This should be a synthesis of the two papers and the ideas presented in discussion. You and your partner should discuss ahead of time how the two papers can be integrated.

### DON'Ts

- Don't give a summary of all of the methods and the results.
- Don't go figure by figure through each of the results in the paper. Some figures, however, may be quite useful to discuss. Remember, we are interested in the big picture. While it is important to consider the data, don't get bogged down in all of the details.
- Don't spend lots of time on small details of the methods. If there are fundamental flaws in the methodology, then we should consider them. Otherwise, we are wasting valuable time. Also, if you find fault in a method, make sure that you have a better alternative in mind.
- Don't ask vague questions like "Was this a good paper?" or "So, what did they do?"
- Don't be tied to the questions that you have written ahead of time. Go with the thread of the discussion.
- Don't spend the entire time talking. Remember, you are leading a discussion, not lecturing to us.
- Don't spend too much time on one paper or the other. Make sure to plan out the timing with your partner.